

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
J	U	N	E		1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

MOTORCYCLE FACTS AND MYTHS

This information in this article is from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Alaska Trauma Registry.

Fact 1: Head injury is a leading cause of death in motorcycle crashes. Helmets don't prevent motorcycle crashes, but in the event of a crash, riders wearing a helmet have a 29 percent better chance of surviving a crash than riders without a helmet.

Fact 2: Motorcycle helmets offer motorcyclists involved in traffic crashes the best protection from head injury.

Unhelmeted motorcyclists involved in crashes were three times more likely to suffer brain injury than those using helmets.

Fact 3: Medical expenses are higher for unhelmeted riders compared with helmeted riders because of brain injuries.

The long-term cost of a critical head injury is estimated to be almost \$300,000.

Fact 4: Unhelmeted riders involved in crashes are less likely to have insurance than helmeted riders involved in similar crashes.

This is true not only nationally but for Alaska as well. In the most recent five years of Alaska Trauma Registry data, 16% of the helmeted crash victims were uninsured compared with 24% of the unhelmeted crash victims.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 100% helmet usage in Alaska would save Alaskans almost \$1.7 million per year.

Alaska Trauma Registry Calendar JUNE 2001

State of Alaska
Department of Health and Social Services
Division of Public Health
Community Health and Emergency Medical Services

Myth 1: Helmets impair hearing and sight.

Normal peripheral vision is between 200° and 220°. Federal safety standards require that helmets provide 210° of vision. Over 90 percent of crashes happen within a range of 160° (with the majority of the remainder occurring in rear-end collisions). It is clear that helmets do not affect peripheral vision or contribute to crashes.

Helmets reduce the loudness of the noises but do not affect the rider's ability to distinguish between sounds. The University of Southern California conducted on-scene in-depth investigations of 900 motorcycle crash scenes, and could not uncover a single case in which a rider could not detect a critical traffic sound.

Myth 2: Not wearing a helmet is a personal choice which doesn't affect anyone else.

"From the moment of the injury, society picks the person up off the highway; delivers him to a municipal hospital and municipal doctors; provides him with unemployment compensation if, after recovery, he cannot replace his lost job, and, if the injury causes permanent disability, may assume the responsibility for his and his family's continued subsistence. We do not understand a state of mind that permits plaintiff to think that only he himself is concerned."

— Simon v. Governor of MA

Myth 3: Helmets cause neck or spinal cord injuries.

Research has proven this untrue. Five studies all reported a higher incidence of severe neck injuries for unhelmeted riders. An Illinois study found that helmets decrease the number of significant spinal injuries.